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## Wars and genocide

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*The historical settlement area of the Armenians, the Armenian Highland, as well as the South Caucasus have been among the most disputed and contested areas in the world since ancient times. This has had far-reaching negative consequences for the people living in this region: Difficulties in establishing a central state or small statehood, strong dependence on competing regional hegemonic powers, foreign domination, insecurity for life and limb resulting in migration or mass exodus and even genocide.*

*Genocide is one of those crimes caused by wars and civil wars, but also by periods of transformation, by one-party regimes, and by the suspension of parliamentary rule. In the 20th century, serial genocides occurred, not coincidentally, during the two world wars. These wars provided the smokescreen behind which states could realize an intention of extermination usually conceived before the war began.*

*However, the actual military starting point for the Ottoman genocide of three million indigenous Christians was not the First World War, but the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, which became a test run for deportations in the Ottoman province of Edirne (Adrianoupolis), which were carried out as death marches. The Young Turk rulers learned from this occasion that people expelled across state borders returned, while a high proportion of those deported to the interior perished.*

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Պատերազմներ և ցեղասպանություն

Թեսսա Հոֆման

Անկախ հետազոտող և ֆրիլանս գրող

Հիմնաբառեր- պատերազմ, ցեղասպանություն, Օսմանյան կայսրություն, Հայաստան, Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմ, Երկրորդ համաշխարհային պատերազմ, գաղութային ցեղասպանություն, Նամիբիա, Շոա, Ռազմական պարտություն, Զմյուռնիա, Մարդասիրական միջամտություններ:

*Հայերի բնակեցման պատմական տարածքը, Հայկական լեռնաշխարհը, ինչպես նաև Հարավային Կովկասը հնագույն ժամանակներից եղել են աշխարհի ամենավիճելի տարածքներից: Սա լուրջ բացասական հետևանքներ ունեցավ տարածաշրջանում ապրող մարդկանց համար՝ կենտրոնաձիգ պետության կամ փոքր տարածքի վրա պետականության ստեղծման առումով, հանգեցնելով տարածաշրջանում մրցակից հեգեմոն ուժերից մեծ կախվածության, օտարերկրյա գերիշխանության, միգրացիայի կամ զանգվածային արտահոսքի և նույնիսկ ցեղասպանության:*

*Ցեղասպանությունն այն հանցագործություններից է, որը կատարվել է պատերազմների և քաղաքացիական պատերազմների, ինչպես նաև տարատեսակ փոխակերպումների, միակուսակցական ռեժիմների և խորհրդարանական կառավարման կասեցման ժամանակաշրջանների հետևանքով: Քսաներորդ դարում ցեղասպանությունները պատահական չեն եղել երկու համաշխարհային պատերազմների ժամանակ: Այս պատերազմները ծառայում էին որպես քող, որի հետևում պետությունները կարող էին իրականացնել բնաջնջում, ինչը սովորաբար ծրագրվում էր մինչև պատերազմի սկիզբը:*

*Այնուամենայնիվ, երեք միլիոն բնիկ քրիստոնյաների օսմանյան ցեղասպանության փաստացի սկզբնակետը ոչ թե Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմն էր, այլ 1912 և 1913 թթ. Բալկանյան պատերազմները, որոնք փորձնական եղան Օսմանյան Էդիրնե (Ադրիանոպոլիս) նահանգում բռնագաղթումների կազմակերպման տեսանկյունից և իրականացվեցին մահվան երթերի տեսքով: Երիտթուրքերի կառավարիչներն այդպիսով հասկացան, որ երկրից վտարվածները վերադարձել են, իսկ ներքին տեղահանվածների մի զգալի մասը մահացել է:*

Войны и геноцид

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**Ключевые слова:** Война, Геноцид, Османская империя, Армения, Первая мировая война, Вторая мировая война, Колониальный геноцид, Намибия,

Шоа, Военное поражение, Смирна, Гуманитарные интервенции.

Историческая территория расселения армян, Армянское нагорье, а также Южный Кавказ с древнейших времен были одними из самых спорных территорий в мире. Это имело далеко идущие негативные последствия для людей, живущих в этом регионе: трудности в создании централизованного государства или государственности на небольшой территории, сильная зависимость от конкурирующих региональных гегемонистских держав, иностранное доминирование, отсутствие безопасности для жизни и здоровья, приводящее к миграции или массовому исходу и даже геноциду.

Геноцид является одним из тех преступлений, вызванных войнами и гражданскими войнами, а также периодами трансформации, однопартийными режимами и приостановкой парламентского правления. В XX веке геноциды произошли не случайно во время двух мировых войн. Эти войны служили завесой, за которой государства могли реализовать намерения по истреблению, обычно задуманные до начала войны.

Однако фактической отправной точкой османского геноцида трех миллионов коренных христиан стала не Первая мировая война, а Балканские войны 1912 и 1913 годов, ставшие проверкой по организации депортации в османской провинции Эдирне (Адрианополь), которая проводилась в виде маршей смерти. Младотурецкие правители, тем самым, поняли, что люди, изгнанные за пределы страны, вернулись, а значительная часть депортированных во внутренние районы погибла.

\* \* \*

Wars, including civil wars, are among those situations that incite genocide. This is because wars unleash violence. Furthermore, wars form the ideal smokescreen behind which pre-existing intentions of extermination can be realized. International attention is then largely diverted. The history of the 20th century, which has also been called the century of genocides, provides numerous examples of this, especially during the two world wars in the first half of the 20th century. Nearly three million indigenous Christians fell victim to the genocide during the last decade of late Ottoman rule: one and a half million Armenians, one million Greek Orthodox Christians, and at least half a million Syrians. Their extermination reached its peak during World War I, when one and a half million out of 2.5 million Armenians of Ottoman nationality perished in death marches and massacres in just 19 months.

Much of the Armenian extermination is reminiscent of the first genocide of the 20th century, the German Empire's colonial war of extermination against the Herero and Nama peoples in what was then the German colony of Southwest ("Deutsch-Südwest"), now Namibia.

Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha, an officer as experienced as he was brutal, had been charged with putting down the Herero uprising. German Africa historian Jürgen Zimmerer characterizes him as follows: "Although von Trotha knew neither the country nor its people, he possessed a clear conception of world history as a 'racial struggle,' especially between the 'white' and 'black' races, in which there could be only one victor. Accordingly, he wanted to destroy 'the rebellious tribes with streams of blood'. (...) The

hunt ended only at the desert fringe, where the German troops stopped, occupied the water points and denied the Herero, including women and children, the life-saving access to it.

Already during his approach, still from the ship, he ordered to shoot all resisting Herero. The Herero's resistance became a crime worthy of death, and a negotiated peace was out of the question. Instead, von Trotha planned a large-scale encirclement battle at the Waterberg, where the Herero had retreated with their families and possessions. There he wanted to decide the war. However, he failed with it, because the Herero were able to escape. In mid-August 1904, they fled toward the largely waterless Omaheke Desert in the north of the protectorate, pursued by German soldiers who often shot overrun stragglers without much ado. This chase ended only at the desert fringe, where the German troops stopped, occupied the water points and denied the Herero, including women and children, life-sustaining access to it. Precisely because the German army was also exhausted, it used the nature of the land, as it was called, to achieve a victory that it could not achieve in the classical military sense. Thus, the 'waterless Omaheke (...) was to complete what the German arms had begun: The annihilation of the Herero people,' as the official German military historiography put it." [Jürgen Zimmerer: Doch kein Völkermord?] Up to 100,000 people died of thirst in the Omaheke Desert or died in battle and in concentration camps.

The fact that victims resist colonial and genocidal violence is still used to this day as an argument to deny charges of genocide and to refute the victim status of those affected. This also applies to the Ottoman Armenians, of whom, according to estimates by the German embassy in Constantinople, about two million were also driven into desert-like regions [PA/AA/R14093, 4 Oct 1916]. The organizers of these deportations knew very well that Mesopotamia was deadly as a destination of the euphemistically called resettlement or even evacuation. In the entire Ottoman Empire, including its capital Constantinople, there was a famine during the World War, which was aggravated in the predominantly Arab-populated region of Mesopotamia by administrative restrictions and an Entente naval blockade. The local population was not allowed to fish or hunt, and the government's granaries were not opened to supply the hungry people. The Armenians, however, were driven into this very region, provided they survived the deliberately strenuous death marches at all.

Moreover, wartime defeats spur on pre-existing extermination intentions. Referring to the extermination of six of Europe's eleven million Jews, Martin Bergmann wrote: "We know that the persecution of the Jews became more systematically organized and increased in brutality as hopes of conquest faded. When there was little prospect of victory over Russia, Germany declared war on the United States in December 1941; a month later, the 'Final Solution,' the murder of all European Jews, was initiated. As the war progressed, the campaign of extermination against the Jewish population became increasingly important to Hitler. It resulted in a race for time, because the 'Final Solution' was to be completed before the irrevocable defeat of Germany. If Hitler did not go down in world history as a conqueror, he would at least receive grateful recognition as an exterminator of the Jews." [Bergmann, 1995, 265]

The Armenians were doomed by the Ottoman defeat in the devastating two-week Ottoman-Russian Battle of Sarikamış [Armenian: Jeregik; Dec. 22, 1914-Jan. 15, 1915]. In the middle of winter, at least half of the 120,000 poorly equipped Ottoman forces froze to death or fell. Although the Ottoman Minister of

War, Ismail Enver, praised the Ottoman Armenians for their war effort as late as February 1915, the defeat became an important cause for the final decision to exterminate the Armenians in mid-February 1915.

In genocide research, a distinction is made between domestic and foreign genocides. Although the Ottoman genocide belongs to the first category, as a result of the war situation the designated victims, i. e. the Ottoman Christians, were externalized, i. e. declared to be domestic enemies who allegedly collaborated with the Ottoman war enemies Russia and Great Britain. In this view, it does not matter that among the Ottoman victims in Sarikamış were also numerous Armenian soldiers of the sultan.

The real trigger for the Young Turk genocide, however, lies earlier and did not primarily affect Armenians, but Ottoman Greeks. The two Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913 formed the key event that finally brought about the readiness of the Muslim Ottoman elite to commit genocide against non-Muslims. The Balkan wars had turned a total of 800,000 people into refugees, half of whom were Muslims. Epidemics, especially cholera, were rampant among the uprooted populations. In the northern Greek provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, the Muslim population dropped from 2.3 to 1.4 million; 623,000 of the Muslims living there died in massacres, from the hardships of flight and from epidemics. [Schwartz, Michael, *Militärgeschichte – Zeitschrift für historische Bildung*, 2008, Ausg. 2, ] Conversely, before, during and after the Balkan Wars, Ottoman Greeks fled to Greece from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace. The Greek and Muslim refugees each brought with them their own experiences of religiously and nationalistically motivated violence, thus creating further grounds for hatred in their new homelands.

The Young Turk government forcibly settled 1.2 million muhacirler – religious (Muslim) refugees - from the Balkans in the Greek settlements of western Anatolia. As in the mid-19th century with the immigration of hundreds of thousands of North Caucasians, however, the administration's refugee management was still dilettantish. It was not until the beginning of 1914 that an Ottoman directorship for the settlement of tribes and immigrants was established. One of the four departments of this new state agency targeted the non-Muslim indigenous population of the Ottoman Empire; another became responsible for deportation and thus for organizing the death marches of Armenians and Pontos Greeks during World War I.

The collected data and human resources of this authority were used during the World War. The World War, then called the Great or European War, provided the occasion and the opportunity to implement the deportation plans that had been made earlier. Already in the Second Balkan War (1913), the Young Turk leadership had learned that it was not enough to chase undesirable populations across the national border. For the 150,000 Ottoman Greeks expelled from eastern Thrace to Greece would return to their homeland at the end of the war. In contrast, of the 50,000 Eastern Thracians deported to Central Anatolia, nearly half did not survive the rigors of the march and forced settlement under Muslim majorities. This provided the blueprint for further deportations before and especially during the World War. The Ottoman provinces of Edirne - Adrianoupolis in Greek - and Aydın/Smyrna were the first to see massacres and expulsions of Greeks even before the World War. Edirne formed the European remnant of the Ottoman Empire that remained after the Balkan Wars. The province of Aydın was the most prosperous among all Ottoman provinces. There were significant Greek populations in both provinces.

Since the Balkan Wars, the Young Turk elite had been characterized by a distortion of reality that is common to all genocidal instigators: They see themselves as victims or feel justified in 'preemptively'

committing mass murder against minorities in order to save their own group from an allegedly imminent annihilation. In her memoirs published in 1926, the Turkish women's rights activist and nationalist Halide Edip Adıvar [also Edib; 1884-1964] blamed the radicalization of Turkish nationalism after the Balkan Wars on the double standards of Europeans: "(...) the massacres [of Muslims] did not arouse a quarter of the indignation which the Armenian massacres had done. These facts spoke bitterly in Turkey against Europe, and in the Islamic worlds in Asia. I believe that the two different measures meted out by Europe to the Moslem Turks and to the Christian peoples in Turkey keenly intensified nationalism in Turkey. They also aroused the feeling that in order to avoid being exterminated the Turks must exterminate others." [Edip, 1926, 333]

The Ottoman Empire had been at war almost continuously since 1912: The two Balkan Wars were followed by the First World War and, from May 1919, by the Kemalists' battles against the Allied victors and against Greek forces, who were supposed to protect the Christian population in the Smyrna district on behalf of the war-weary Entente states. However, Greek forces soon advanced from western Anatolia into the interior of the country almost as far as Ankara. Greece's state and military leadership pursued an irredentist 'big idea,' the Megali idea: This meant the unification of all Greek settlements. From the Turkish point of view, Kemal's struggle was an anti-imperialist liberation strike against the Allied occupation and Greece's irredentism; de facto, however, this war degenerated into a war of extermination against the remaining indigenous Christians of Ottoman nationality.

The Kemalist invasion of the Republic of Armenia in September 1920 also took on the character of a war of extermination [Walker, 1983, 277]. By mid-1919, the number of refugees in the Republic had risen to half a million. As in the case of the Young Turk invasion two years earlier, in 1918, the Kemalist conquerors were not satisfied with destruction and looting, but immediately set about decimating the civilian population. In the recapture of Kars alone, about six thousand Armenians were killed during a three-day massacre. About three thousand Armenian soldiers and 30 senior officers, including four generals, were captured and hundreds were taken to Erzurum and Sarikamış for forced labor [Walker, 1983, 311].

On 11 May 1921, an investigative commission of the Soviet Provisional Revolutionary Commissariat found that 11,836 bodies had been dug up in the village of Kultakhchi (Hamamli district), 90 percent of which were women and children. Judging from the wounds of the dead, they had been brutally slaughtered and mutilated. [Zavriev, 1947, 96] Similarly gruesome incidents in the town of Karakilisa (Karaklis; today Vanadzor, Lori province), where 1,200 to 1,500 massacre victims were found, were reported by an American eyewitness on 20 May 1921 [Zavriev, 1947, 96]; he came to the conclusion that the massacres could only have been committed by a detachment of the trained and regular Turkish army. The oldest male corpses among the victims were 14 years old. [Zavriev, 1947, 97].

After the transfer of power to the Soviets, the number of people killed during the Turkish occupation of the Republic of Armenia in 1920 was put at 60,000, half of them women and children; 32,000 other inhabitants starved to death, 8,000 were abducted and 25 were hanged [Zavriev, 1947, 96].

According to these calculations, the total number of victims in the Republic of Armenia was 100,000 civilians.

In the decisive Greek-Turkish battle of Dumlupınar, Kemal's forces succeeded in breaking through the nearly 500-kilometer-long Greek front line in late August 1922. In their chaotic retreat to the Mediterranean coast, the surviving Greek soldiers, disappointed in their leadership, set fire to Muslim villages. Tens of thousands of Christian rural and small-town residents joined the fleeing Greek troops in well-founded fear of revenge. As early as 5 September 1922, 150,000 refugees crowded into Smyrna. [Lou Ureneck, 2016, 91]

In terms of population, Smyrna was the second largest city in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, it was a predominantly non-Muslim city, which Muslims therefore often disdainfully referred to as 'gavur (infidel) Smyrna.' In the 18th century, Smyrna prospered as an international trade center. According to an estimate by the U.S. consul George Horton in 1922, there were about half a million inhabitants at the beginning of the 20th century, among them 150,000 Greek Orthodox Christians of Ottoman nationality, 25,000 Armenians and Sephardic Jews each, 10,000 Italians, three thousand French, two thousand British and three hundred Americans. (Horton, George, *The Blight of Asia*)

The tragedy of the Christian population and the numerous Christian refugees was played out before the eyes of a large international audience: missionaries and teachers, diplomats and businessmen, as well as the crews of 27 foreign warships and merchant ships anchored in the Gulf of Smyrna. After an occupation of three years and four months, the Greek troops and administration had disembarked from Smyrna on 8 September 1922. In the early hours of the following morning, Kemalist cavalry units under the command of Nureddin Pasha, the 'Butcher of Smyrna,' occupied the now completely undefended city. They first looted and devastated the Armenian neighborhood of Haynots before setting it on fire on the night of 13 September, presumably to permanently displace residents and refugees. The fire quickly spread to the adjacent Greek neighborhood.

For four days, the obviously controlled and manipulated Smyrna 'Holocaust' [Bierstadt, Dobson, 2008, 224] as foreign eyewitnesses paraphrased the crime, destroyed the lower, Christian or European parts of the city. Many Christians died in their burning homes or were crushed by collapsing walls. Many more Christians drowned in Smyrna harbor while trying to escape to the Allied fleet, including three American destroyers.

On 16 September 1922, Nureddin ordered that all Greek and Armenian men between the ages of 18 and 45 be treated as prisoners of war "until the cessation of hostilities," [Angelomatis, 1963, 262] refugees from outside, were ordered to leave the country by 30 September 1922. After that, men and women were separated, and the men were led away and shot in groups [Housepian Dobkin, 1998, 172f.].

The example of Smyrna shows the ambivalent nature of war, which on the one hand promotes genocide. On the other hand, military interventions can stop or prevent genocide. If such interventions do not take place, the victims are helplessly at the mercy of the perpetrators. After the destruction of Smyrna, no one on the international stage was willing to fight for the right of Greeks or other Christians to exist in Asia Minor.

In their bilateral treaty of January 1923, Turkey and Greece decided on the mutual forced expulsion and cancellation of citizenship for their ethno-religious minorities. In this way, Turkey realized a long-cherished plan, since it had already proposed such a solution to Greece in 1914. However, due to the outbreak of war in 1914, there was no forced exchange of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire or the Muslim population of Greece. Now, ten years later, the multilateral Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923 followed, in which, as the Swiss historian Hans-Lukas Kieser formulated it, it was retroactively recognized that " (...) the expulsion and liquidation of millions of people in favor of a breakneck 'national renewal' pursued by a dominant elite at the expense of minorities. There was no more talk about the return of Armenian refugees and the establishment of justice. The treaty also provided for a Greek-Turkish population transfer, the first of its kind on such a large scale, which legalized an 'ethnic cleansing' that had already largely taken place. Referring to the talks on Kurdish, Armenian, and Greek minorities in his country, Riza Nur, the secretary-general of the Turkish conference delegation, noted that 'these foreign elements are a plague and microbes' and that the Kurds must be 'cleansed of the foreign language and race' by means of an 'assimilation program" [Kieser, Hans-Lukas, *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, 2002, 2, 135].

**Conclusion:** The examples described here show that wars not only provide occasions and camouflage for carrying out genocidal intentions, but degenerate into wars of extermination when intentions of conquest and subjugation merge with intentions of extermination. Military defeats do not diminish the intentions of annihilation, but even increase them. On the other hand, military interventions can serve to prevent genocide or to liberate groups already threatened, if they are carried out in time. However, it is often the fear of states of becoming involved in armed conflicts that prevents such timely interventions.

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